

THE "MYSTERY" OF THE WAKE FOREST SITUATION

On December 8, 1955, Mr. Basil M. Watkins, at that time president of the board of trustees of Wake Forest College, announced that a nine-member committee of trustees had been named to make a full-scale investigation of the "over-all situation" at Wake Forest College.

To quote from an Associated Press article reporting this announcement:

"Watkins said in a statement, 'There is an ever-increasing tide of belief among the many people who love Wake Forest that there are serious matters involving the college and its administration that must be aired completely for the welfare of all persons concerned.'

"Watkins emphasized that the investigation 'has not been brought on by our recent problems concerning athletics.'

"He said the athletic situation will be studied, but it will be only one of the many phases of the investigation."

The latest significant development in this long-drawn-out controversy came on June 29, when the college trustees voted 20-13 against "discharging" Dr. Harold Tribble as president.

Reporting this meeting of June 29th. in the *Winston-Salem Journal*, Mr. Roy Thompson writes:

"When the meeting adjourned, the pro-Tribble trustees were appealing for one and all to 'join ranks and work together for Wake Forest.'

"Mr. Watkins expressed the view of many anti-Tribble Baptists when he said in parting, 'I don't think we can possibly unite behind that man.'

"So where do the Baptists go from here?"

"The anti-Tribble trustees had no immediate plans, but several of them said they had no intention of giving up the fight."

What's it all about?

From what has been made public concerning this controversy, it would seem that the average Baptist would have but little concrete information as to the criticisms that have been brought against Dr. Tribble. Thus a penetrating editorial in the *Winston-Salem Twin City Sentinel* observes that it is hard for the average concerned outsider to assess the merit of Dr. Tribble's administration—"for the results of the trustee investigation of administrative relations last winter have never been made public. At their meeting in February, the trustees voted to lock up the report. And Basil M. Watkins, former chairman of the board, has charged that some of the trustees themselves have not seen it" (June 3).

Mr. Watkins' exact words on this subject, as he has been reported by the press to have uttered them after the June 29th. meeting, are as follows:

"There are men on that board who don't know to this day what's in the committee's report. The executive committee won't let them see it" (*Winston-Salem Journal*, June 30).

Thus the *Twin City Sentinel* editorial, referred to above, concludes from these facts concerning the suppression of the investigating committee's report:

"The old question, then, of 'what's wrong with Tribble' is still a mystery to most of us."

James M. Bulman,

Editor

SOUTHERN BAPTIST FREE PRESS

Subscription Rate:

One Dollar per Year

Official Organ of the "COMMITTEE FOR BAPTIST CHURCH AUTONOMY, INC."
Wright Building, High Point, N. C.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

AUGUST, 1956

VOL. 1 NO. 2

COMMITTEE OFFICERS

President, DAVID HEITMAN.....Lexington, N. C. — *Vice-President*, WILLIAM C. LASSITER.....Raleigh, N. C.
General Sec., DR. C. K. RAND, High Point, N. C. — *Treasurer*, REV. WOODROW ROBBINS, High Point N. C.
Publications Secretary, DR. JAMES M. BULMAN, East Spencer, N. C.
Promotional Secretary, REV. J. T. DAVIS, Lexington, N. C.
Membership Secretary, REV. GLENN GAFFNEY, Greensboro, N. C.

What was in that report?

Whatever the nine-member investigating committee found, one would think that some rather strong evidence must have turned up; for, as Mr. Arthur Johnsey's story of the June 29th. meeting puts it, "*all nine members of a special investigating committee which spent weeks last year delving into affairs of the Tribble administration, were among the 13 members voting to discharge the president*" (*Greensboro Daily News*, June 30). The importance of this fact is stressed by the *Twin City Sentinel* editorial:

"And it is significant that all nine members of the investigating committee who are still members of the board of trustees voted to discharge the president outright. This would indicate that they, at least, consider their own findings give sufficient basis to risk letting the college settle itself without a president."

Furthermore, it has been reported to us from sources which we consider absolutely reliable that some of those nine members began their investigation strongly in favor of Dr. Tribble.

The "mystery" needs exploring

What are the facts regarding the administration of Dr. Harold Tribble? Can they be made available to the Baptist people? Although the great importance of this issue makes discussion in the public press appropriate, it is especially in order for the Baptist press to provide for a full airing of the whole situation; for, after all, Wake Forest belongs to the cooperating Baptists of North Carolina. But can we expect such an airing to be provided by the denominationally-controlled papers of North Carolina? Such has not as yet been done in the many months in which the controversy has been going on; and, in view of the apparently strong "pro-Tribble" sentiment which has been expressed in those denominationally-controlled papers, there seems to be no real reason to expect such an airing in the future. *But—starting with our issue of next month—it will be the purpose of the SOUTHERN BAPTIST FREE PRESS to give extended consideration to this matter which is so vital to North Carolina Baptists, and which certainly holds an interest for Baptists everywhere.*

To the reader: Response to the first issue of our paper has been such as to permit this second issue to be offered to you free of charge. Those who have already subscribed will be given the paper for an extra month. However, we cannot guarantee the publishing of any additional issues free of charge. You may be sure of obtaining the remaining issues for the next 12 months by sending one dollar to: "Committee For Baptist Church Autonomy, Inc., Wright Building, High Point, N. C."

WHAT THE READERS SAID

Many letters were received from several states regarding the first issue of our paper.

By far most of the comments were *favorable* — like the following:

"I like your first issue's information!" — from a prominent young minister.

"We are delighted to know that we can get the inside story of the matter" — from a layman.

"What you have to say [of the convention] clarifies much that happened and you have used most tellingly the opinions of the press as they observed the situation from a strictly non-partisan basis" — from a minister who has written several articles for one of the state denominational papers.

"I think your analysis of the situation is extremely interesting, perhaps thorough and correct" — from one of the top-most pulpit personalities of his state.

Only a few comments were *unfavorable* — like the following from a minister of more than forty years of preaching experience:

"It brings a sorrow to my heart to know that a group of good preachers are allowing themselves to be in the objective case. Your efforts are designed to hurt the organized work of N. C. . . . Brethren, if you would put forth the same efforts in advancing God's kingdom that you are in a fight, it would get better results."

Many of the comments were *very enthusiastic* — like the following from one who has preached for more than fifty years:

"I cannot express to you my thanks for the copy of the little paper which came today. . . . having followed all the proceedings of the Rocky Mount affair that I have had access to, I am deeply interested in a periodical that even carries the name 'free press.' Everyone who is informed knows that the denominational papers are set to defend the 'big boys' (?), regardless of what they say or write."

Or like the following from a well-known minister: "I received a copy of 'Southern Baptist Free Press' . . . and have just finished reading the last word. It is concise, informative, and convincing. . . . I believe what you and your committee are now doing . . . could start a chain reaction that would greatly alter the regrettable trend towards a Baptist hierarchy and centralized control."

Or like the following from one long-known as an active denominational figure: "If your 'story of what happened behind the scenes' is as revealing and makes others as 'hot' and angry as it has me, it will have a tremendous effect."

A CONSTRUCTIVE MOVE

In contrast to the attitude of some groups who have tried to avoid the "autonomy issue" as they would the dreaded plague, the official program for the coming annual meeting of Piedmont Association (representing churches in the area of Greensboro and High Point, N. C.) makes provision for the presentation of this matter. The program for the second day of that associational meeting, which will be on October 26, calls for Mr. William C. Lassiter, of Raleigh, N. C., to speak on the question of local church autonomy.

Mr. Lassiter — who is attorney for the N. C. Press Association, a member of the First Baptist Church of Raleigh, and Vice-President of our committee — has written for private circulation an article on the subject. We plan to print certain portions of that article in a future issue.

CONTINUING

Our Story On The Convention

In last month's issue, we reported our efforts to get the question of the autonomy of the local church before the 1956 Southern Baptist Convention. Near the end of the Thursday afternoon session, we "won a two-day fight" (as stated by the *Commercial Appeal*, of Memphis, Tenn.) by getting to present the matter to the convention. It was presented by reading a proposed *constitutional amendment* and a *resolution*.

The proposed *constitutional amendment*, which will be acted upon by the 1957 convention, would add the following to Article IV, the statement on "Authority" in the constitution:

"This convention does not claim that affiliation with this convention is in any way necessary for a church to be a Missionary Baptist Church; nor does this convention claim that affiliation with any other Baptist body, whether district association or state convention, is in any way necessary for a church to be affiliated with this convention; nor does this convention claim that a church's affiliation with this convention, as conceived by this convention, is in any degree of such a nature as would prevent a church that once has entered into affiliation with this convention from discontinuing that affiliation, should that church for any reason whatsoever decide to discontinue that affiliation."

The proposed *resolution* asked "that we now reaffirm the following statement on Baptist congregational principle which was issued by the 1928 Southern Baptist Convention:

'All Baptist general bodies are voluntary organizations. . . . Churches may seek to fulfill their obligation to extend Christ's kingdom by co-operating with these general organizations, but always on a purely voluntary basis, and without surrendering in any way or degree their right of self-determination'" [which statement appears in writings of Dr. W. W. Barnes issued before and after the trial of the North Rocky Mount Church case; this being the statement which he

declared, under oath, was no longer true of the Baptist position].

The resolution also asked that the convention "repudiate" the concept of a Baptist Church which had been set forth by the North Carolina Supreme Court in the North Rocky Mount Church case.

At our request, this resolution was sent to the Resolutions Committee. The report of this committee, whose chairman was Dr. Louie Newton, was given at 9:40 Friday morning. The report of the committee recommended that the convention accept not merely the excerpt from the 1928 statement which we had requested, but also the full statement which had been issued by the 1928 Southern Baptist Convention on the relation of the convention to other Baptist bodies.

The report stated:

"Since the resolution offered by James M. Bulman (N. C.) raises the question of the relation of the Southern Baptist Convention to local churches and other Baptist bodies, and refers in part to a previous action of the Convention on this vital principle, we recommend that this Convention reaffirm the full statement referred to in the resolution . . . as recorded on pages 32-33, 1928 Annual, entitled 'Relation of Southern Baptist Convention to Other Baptist Bodies'" (*Southern Baptist Convention Bulletin*, 1956, fourth day).

And this brings us to where we left off in our story of last month. . . .

Dr. Newton commenced to read this notable 1928 statement, covering some 1,000 words. It was the unusual length of the statement which made this "what some messengers considered an attempt by Dr. Louie D. Newton of Atlanta, chairman of the body's resolutions committee, to talk through the time allowed for reading of what he called a 'statement of principles'" (Phillip Thomas, Religion Editor, *Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, Tenn., June 2, emphasis supplied). If such were the attempt, however, "this failed when a motion from the floor, asking extension of time, was easily passed by voice vote" (*loc. cit.*).

After reading the 1,000 word 1928 statement to the convention, and recommending its adoption by the convention, the committee chairman, Dr. Newton, stated:

"we do not interpret it to be the responsibility of the committee or of this convention to pass judgment on the decision of the North Carolina Supreme Court or any court, or upon the decision of the North Carolina Baptist Association, or any other Baptist body" (John T. Stewart, Church Editor, *St. Louis Dispatch*, June 2).

(Concerning this statement by the committee, the Virginia *Religious Herald* makes the remark: "Members of the Committee apparently forgot that only two years prior, in 1954, the Convention approved a statement commending the Federal Supreme Court for its decision with respect to segregation of races in the public schools. Since the eighteenth century Baptists in Virginia have used the right of petition regarding civil court opinions and acts of the General Assembly." [Editorial, June 14])

Amending the Committee's Report

Following Dr. Newton's motion for acceptance of the 1928 statement, an amendment was offered to his report. While prefaced with an expression of appreciation to the committee for its issuing so positive a statement on autonomy, the amendment sought to make the 1928 statement "impinge upon the current critical situation" by having the convention go on and "*repudiate*" the definition of the nature of a Baptist Church as had been set forth by the North Carolina Supreme Court in 1954.

At this point a Louisville pastor, Dr. N. Burnett Magruder, made a "brief but pungent" appeal for the convention to speak strongly and repudiate the North Carolina court (*Courier-Journal*, June 2). Dr. Magruder contended:

"As one prominent person has said, 'You can never know what a principle means until you get down to cases.' We have steadfastly spoken against totalitarian trends in Catholicism, communism, and political ideology. Our only interest is to act as Baptist people in the light of our own history.

"To speak softly when we should speak strongly in a matter pertaining to our own history will invalidate our right to speak in other cases in the future. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose" (*loc. cit.*).

The vote on this amendment is thus described by the Religion Editor of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*:

"A voice vote on Dr. Bulman's amendment to repudiate the court decision was indecisive. The amendment lost on a standing vote, about 2 to 1, with many messengers abstaining" (*loc. cit.*).

Then the Rev. David Miller, of Autryville, N. C.,

"moved that the entire matter be tabled, contending that '99 per cent of the people in North Carolina are happy with the Supreme Court's decision'. His motion was voted down by a strong vocal expression" (*loc. cit.*).

The convention then voted on accepting the 1928 statement. The statement was adopted "with only a scattered dissent" (Associated Press, June 1).

"Half-Victory"

As expressed by the Associated Press, the convention's acceptance of the 1928 statement "represented a half-victory" for those of us in North Carolina who have been contending for the autonomy of the local church as against the North Carolina Supreme Court decision.

It would seem that certain vital factors regarding this action by the convention have hardly been appreciated. A penetrating editorial in the *Evening Telegram*, of Rocky Mount, N. C., asks,

"To what extent is the Convention's action a repudiation of the testimony of outstanding Baptist church authorities and leaders who testified in behalf of the so-called North Rocky Mount Church minority?" (June 5)

The convention's action can hardly be anything else than a clearly-implied repudiation of a very significant portion of that testimony. No doubt the most essential part of Dr. Barnes' testimony was his rejection of a basic portion of a book which he had written. He testified:

"When I wrote, 'All Baptist general bodies are voluntary organizations established by individuals who wish to cooperate for some common end or ends in extending the Kingdom of God. This convention is not an ecclesiastical body or federal body composed of state conventions. Churches may cooperate with these general organizations but always on a purely voluntary basis and without surrendering in any degree their right of self-determination,' that was twenty years ago and what I believed, but I have learned more about Baptists and I don't agree with it" (*Index No. 95, Second District, Supreme Court of North Carolina, Fall Term, 1954*, p. 103. And yet this statement which Dr. Barnes had written some twenty years before—which statement, of course, is simply a reproduction of the 1928 Southern Baptist Convention's statement which we have been discussing above — is also found in his latest book [the famous, *The Southern Baptist Convention: 1845-1953*], which was to come off the press soon after Dr. Barnes had given this court testimony! And yet Dr. Barnes testified of this latest book: "In my forthcoming publication there is no place for a discussion of what I wrote in my book in 1934 and reprinted in 1946. It is not touched on one way or the other, neither affirmed nor changed"! — Court Record, as cited, p. 107).

Since, as has been remarked above, this statement which Dr. Barnes had written in his book in 1934, and reprinted in 1946 (and also, it deserves emphasizing, found in his book of 1954, published after the trial), is simply a quotation from the 1928 statement on the relation of the Southern Baptist Convention to other Baptist bodies, then the 1956 Convention, in reaffirming the 1928 statement, has overwhelmingly affirmed the principle of autonomy in the very words which Dr. Barnes testified were no longer true of the Baptist position!

And it is well to remember the observation of Mr. William C. Lassiter, attorney of Raleigh, N. C., that it was "prin-

cipally" upon the testimony of Dr. Barnes and certain other Baptist leaders that the trial judge in the North Rocky Mount Church case made his decision.

However, while feeling strongly encouraged over the "half-victory" which has been won, it must be remembered that it has been but "half" a victory. Careful consideration should be given to the following observations of the Virginia Baptist paper, *Religious Herald*, in an editorial of June 14:

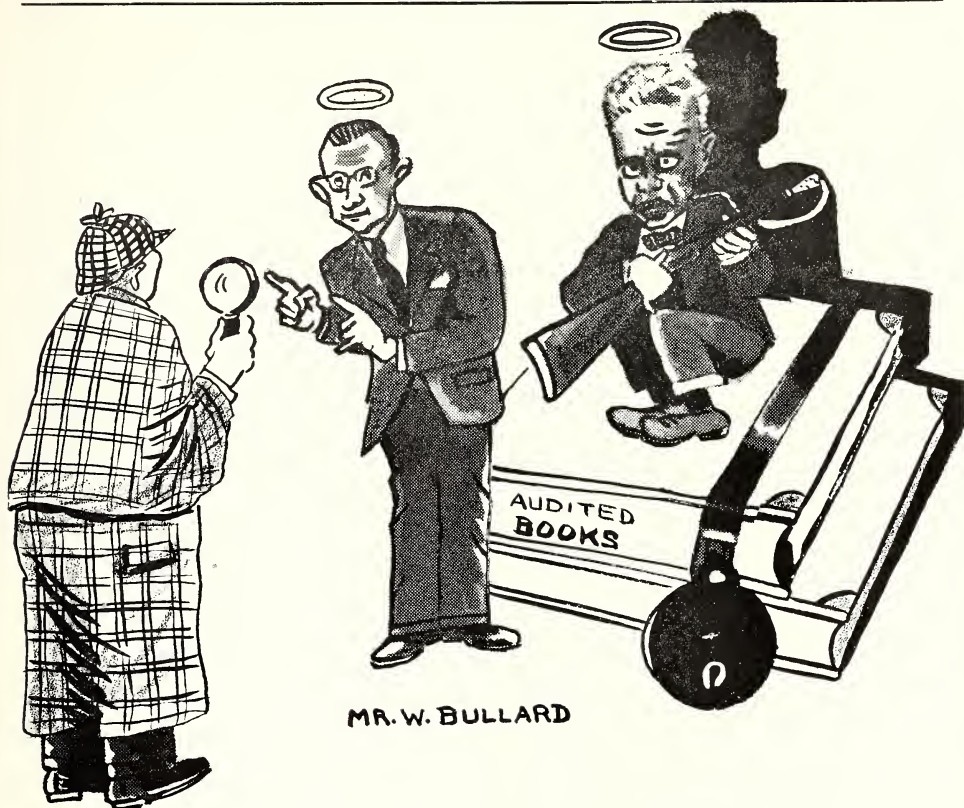
"The Convention reaffirmed a previous statement with respect to relationships with other bodies but weakened its position by a negative vote upon an amendment offered by James M. Bulman. At some time in the future a civil court may interpret that vote as an approval of the principle set forth in the decision by the Supreme Court of North Carolina. The Convention did not settle the issue. The present situation is dangerous."

As this *Religious Herald* editorial goes on to state, there is need of the convention arriving at a statement

"that will make clear the relationship between the local church and other bodies. Local churches should require such a statement for their protection against possible civil court actions in the future."

It is certainly true that the present situation is "dangerous." And it is certainly true that, in spite of the extensive pronouncement which has been adopted by the convention, there is need of such a statement as will spell out in clear-cut terms the convention's acknowledgement that the local churches' right to complete self-determination involves their right to "discontinue affiliation" with the convention. Perhaps even more than a constitutional amendment is needed, but the adoption of such a constitutional amendment as will be presented to the convention next year will contribute measurably towards fully clarifying the relation between the Southern Baptist Convention and the local churches.

J. M. B.



COMMITTEE FOR BAPTIST CHURCH AUTONOMY

"Now, Now. You know there's no need to open These Books!"

The Asheville Citizen of July 18 carried the following dispatch from Hendersonville, N. C.

"The General Board of the Baptist State Convention today heard financial reports, voted approval of the appointment of a general missionary, and a plan of apportionment of funds for the state and Southern conventions.

"These matters were among those which came up at the board's semi-annual meeting at Fruitland Baptist Assembly near here.

"There was no word, however, about a request the board attempt to determine whether any state convention funds were used to pay attorneys in connection with litigation over the North Rocky Mount Church issue.

"The Rev. Woodrow Bullard, the

boards' president, said after the meeting no statement concerning such a request would be made now.

"A report received yesterday said the request made by the recently-formed Committee For Baptist Church Autonomy was to be heard today."

President Bullard later informed our committee that the request from our committee was presented but was merely received as information. Thus the General Board has refused to authorize the Certified Public Accountant who audits the Convention's books to make a report as to whether any of the Convention's funds were used in connection with the North Rocky Mount Church case.

As stated in an Associated Press article of July 21, it is our plan to carry this matter to the State Convention itself when it meets in Winston-Salem this fall.

"Until the publishing of this article we have been refused a hearing all the way up and down the line" . . .

By Dr. Lewis G. Prince, pastor of the
University Baptist Church, Tulsa, Oklahoma

A New Question Arises

[*Editor's Note:* According to the Associated Press, two incidents stood out above all else in importance on the first day of the recent meeting of the Southern Convention. Writing for that news agency, Mr. Ed Campbell stated that the efforts of an Oklahoma minister, Dr. Lewis G. Prince, to get the floor to find out the status of his church with the Convention, and the efforts of certain of us from North Carolina to introduce the issue of local church autonomy, "overshadowed a series of annual reports and the unopposed ratification of several major convention projects recommended by its executive committee."

It should be obvious that any serious effort to interpret the 1956 Convention must take account of Dr. Prince's efforts.

After addressing Dr. Warren twice at the beginning of the Convention's proceedings, asking to be allowed to state a question of personal privilege, and after failing in these attempts, Dr. Prince tried again at a time for "miscellaneous business." On being refused again by the chair, the messenger immediately appealed to the body to be allowed to state his question of privilege. It appeared to this observer that, as Dr. Prince appealed to be heard, the messengers were on the verge of granting his request — as "shouts of 'let him be heard' rang from the audience" (Ray Shaw, *The Daily Oklahoman*, May 31); but a timely thrust of humour from Dr. J. D. Grey seemed to turn opinion the other way. Thus Dr. Prince "was shouted down in an attempt to tell the convention how he and his church were ousted from their local and state Baptist associations for practicing open communion" (Associated Press).

It is important not to lose sight of the real issues involved in this incident. We are not concerned in this connection with the question of whether or not the University Baptist Church is right in its observance of open communion. Our con-

cern at present lies with these two questions: (1) Should that church's relation to the Southern Baptist Convention be affected by the fact that it has been dropped from the fellowship of its district association and state convention? (2) Should Dr. Prince have been permitted to present his case before the Southern Baptist Convention?

It is idle to argue that the status of that church with the Southern Convention was such as to raise no real question, for Dr. Prince's name had been dropped from the list of Southern Baptist pastors published in the latest Convention Annual — although his name had been carried in the Annuals from 1939 to 1954. And it is certainly a matter of the most serious nature as to whether or not Dr. Prince should have been allowed to speak on a question of personal privilege; for if one messenger can be deprived of the privilege granted him in the rules governing the Convention, what protection can those rules be regarded as affording any messenger?

In the article that follows, the reader will note that Dr. Prince states: "*until the publishing of this article — we have been refused a hearing all the way up and down the line.*" Accordingly, we take this as an occasion to say that it is to meet such a situation as this that the SOUTHERN BAPTIST FREE PRESS is designed. When one cannot get a hearing in any other publication on an issue that is of concern to Southern Baptists, then — excepting only the limitations of space and the possibility of obscenity and libel — he may expect to find a hearing in these pages.]

I have been requested by Dr. James Bulman to prepare for publication the facts pertaining to my unsuccessful attempt to present a "Question of Privilege" to the Southern Baptist Convention at the 1956 meeting at Kansas City.

Two Sets Of Facts

There are two sets of facts.

(1) One is a documented, accurate, uncontroverted set of facts which present an issue. An issue that deals with freedom of worship, freedom of speech, autonomy of the local church and the integrity of the individual in matters of conscience. An issue which, if considered in the light of the impersonal facts, will bring into sharp focus certain matters which definitely ought to be carefully considered by the Southern Baptist Convention, if it is to remain a democratic body of any sort.

There has been a great deal of misinformation, and, as a result, misunderstanding in this whole matter. A careful study of my "Question of Privilege" will reveal that I have been aware all the way through of a problem which has more than one side. There are many viewpoints. I have always recognized the rights of the Southern Baptist Convention. I have also, in every effort, fully recognized the right of "other Baptist bodies" such as the local association and the state convention. However, up to this present moment I have failed to get

many people (and no Baptist body of any kind) to recognize the rights of the University Baptist Church. No case should be settled without hearing both sides. Yet, *until the publishing of this article — we have been refused a hearing all the way up and down the line.*

When the *Review and Expositor* published Dr. Bulman's article, "Baptist Principle Under Trial" (July, 1955), it also said, "The *Review and Expositor* is not taking sides in the debate, but opening its columns for the discussion of this highly important question" (emphasis supplied). I therefore submitted an article to that publication which contained pertinent facts involved in this issue. The *Review and Expositor* would not publish my article; and as an interested reader of the *Review and Expositor*, I ask why their columns were suddenly closed to this "important question"?

I attempted at Kansas City to present these facts. Only the pertinent facts. I ask anyone to read Kerfoot's "Parliamentary Law" on a "Question of Privilege" and form his own conclusions as to whether or not — according to the rules — I should have been allowed to present the facts.*

**Editors' Note: Kerfoot's Parliamentary Law, adopted by the Convention By-Laws as "the parliamentary authority of the Convention," states: "It frequently happens that in one way or another the rights of the assembly, or of some member of the assembly, are being encroached upon, or it may be that something occurs to the discomfort of one or more members. Or perhaps a member wishes information upon some point, or desires something that he thinks he has a right to demand. In any such case the member may endeavor to secure his rights by means of a question of privilege. . . . To raise a question of privilege one has only to rise and call out: 'Mr. President, I rise to a question of privilege.' He does not have to wait to secure the floor. He may do this even when another has the floor, and without waiting for recognition by the chair. No second is required. This is in the nature of a claim rather than of a motion. The chair will say: 'Please state the question.' The member will then state what the question is which he wishes to raise. This cannot be amended. It cannot be debated."*

Since the Southern Baptist Convention met in Kansas City, I have mailed to each and every Baptist State Paper these facts (21 state papers in all) — requesting that they be published. I have received 3 courteous letters declining to publish the information, 2 very discourteous letters scorning the very idea, and from the other 16—silence.

(2) The second set of facts has never been published or revealed, either publicly or privately. They are an unbelievable array of sordid facts concerning the "full treatment" that we have been given by fellow Southern Baptists in Oklahoma. They are facts which prove a determined effort to dissolve the University Baptist Church, to discredit its pastor, to

disturb its membership, to prevent associate workers from both coming and staying, to challenge our right to even use the name of "Southern Baptist" and to brand us as "off-brand outcasts." The most outstanding of these facts concerns the efficiency of their operations — for only by the grace of God has the University Baptist Church weathered the storm.

First Set Available

Now, the first set of facts are available. They are in rough manuscript form. I will personally do anything feasible, within our desire to find and follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to let all who desire to read them.

Second Set For History

The second set of facts will not be available unless a full and official investigation is made in our life time. However, we do plan to leave them to the writers of history, *for these facts will mark a date as to when Baptists could no longer claim never to have persecuted.*

The "New" Question

This brings us to the "new" question, which is very important just now.

I thought all through our ordeal that, when the time came, most Southern Baptists — including our leaders — would react rather spontaneously to a case as open and shut as ours actually is. I anticipated only real "Christian" treatment from the Southern Baptist Convention. I had a case; I asked in a friendly spirit that it be considered; I was perfectly willing to abide by whatever the decision was. After being rebuffed twice at the Convention by the chair, and seeing that I was not being treated fairly or justly, and definitely feeling Spiritual guidance, — I tried earnestly and strenuously to get the Convention proper to hear me. Second guessers may think that they would have done differently. But who can say what he would have done under the same circumstances?

However, I was in for a rude awakening. Convention leadership definitely did not intend for my case to be heard under any circumstances. And they were very successful, even though it took the "junking" of both Constitutional rights and Parliamentary Law. If any of them have had any pangs of conscience about it, they have kept it well to themselves.

My readers may not yet be convinced that the leadership of the Southern Convention is really determined to keep this matter from coming out into the open. There is no question but that every principle of freedom known to Baptists has been flagrantly violated. Why? *Why is it so important that this case be kept quiet?* Why does the leadership object so strenuously to letting the rank and file of Southern Baptists know the facts? There are several possible answers contained in the available set of facts.

The "new" question does not deal with the attitude of the *leadership*. We have our answer there. The question we now would like answered is, **What does the laity and average church pastor think about the situation?** Are they willing to listen? And if they listen and see — will they be courageous enough to do anything about it? These are questions which I cannot answer. Although the answer to them may be far more important than many realize right now.

Some may pass it off by claiming that I am not a real Southern Baptist. Listen, — I am more of a historic Southern Baptist than these who have successfully deprived us of our rights. I would never be a part to any of the methods used against us, for they violate every Baptist principle and belief. I would never try to destroy or coerce a fellow Christian or a group of fellow Christians just because of a difference in belief. I would never sacrifice a principle of freedom for popularity's sake. I would not stand with or for any organization which deliberately, by sheer numbers, would attempt to compel a church or individual to "conform or else."

If to be a "sound" Oklahoma Baptist, I must perjure my own soul, cross my fingers when expected to affirm something I do not agree with, be silent and sin by so doing — then I cannot be "sound." If I am expected to go along with something when every fibre of my mind cries out against it — then I am sorry, I cannot go along.

I well know the price for such a position — I have paid it — but I could not do otherwise and remain true to my instincts. At least, both God and man know where I stand.

It would be just as sensible for the democrats of Oklahoma to say that I have to be a democrat in order to be an American as for Oklahoma Baptists to say that I have to be a closed communionist in order to be a Southern Baptist. Yet, they have not only successfully accomplished it: they now have their action sanctioned by the Southern Baptist Convention.

Will the Southern Baptist Convention stand by its position on the autonomy of the local church as strongly as it is standing on its position of not interfering with other religious bodies? If it doesn't, something is going to change — and that real soon. The Southern Baptist Convention evidenced no concern over the rights of a member of the Southern Baptist Convention — only over a position that they do not interfere with another Baptist body. The question was what to do about a member who had been injured by another Baptist body. The answer was to further mis-treat the member.

In all of this, very few have shown any interest in defending the autonomy of the local church. Apparently, our church is expendable in the march of an organization. Remember, if ONE church is expendable — ANY church is expendable.

Judge Jerome Frank, in a recent decision in the U. S. Court of Appeals, made this statement: "The test of the moral quality of a civilization is its treatment of the weak and powerless."

That is also true of the Southern Baptist Convention. You have the power to

crush the University Baptist Church, for we are powerless and weak. But in so doing, the Southern Baptist Convention ceases to be what it has purported to be for these one hundred and eleven years. And the final decision is going to be made by the 95% of Southern Baptists who do not constitute the present leadership. The answer may come by default: just doing nothing; but it becomes an answer just the same.

I do not know how many will read this — but I hope enough to give me an answer. For we are not going to try to force anything upon Southern Baptists which they definitely do not want.

The Southern Baptist Convention openly and flagrantly refused to hear a member. The question of the rights and privileges of this member were raised by the member himself under the plain provisions of both the Constitution and Kerfoot's "Parliamentary Law." The question was raised legitimately and justifiably. This member was humiliated and treated as an intruder — not even given the basic right of a hearing. The leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention knew the score and the contents of the "Question of Privilege" — the membership did not. Yet, the membership did know, for they witnessed it, that a member was deliberately being refused a hearing. The "Question of Privilege" was never brought up. The basic right of freedom of speech was violated to prevent the question from coming up. *What the rank and file of Southern Baptists will do about this is the new and as yet unanswered question.*

If you want to look into this matter, to have it brought out into the open, to have every question answered, then *you* must demand it, for your present leadership is not planning to give it to you. They are already in the process of continuing their plan of discounting and discrediting the whole thing. And unless the average Southern Baptist does something about it, the leaders will succeed. If you believe what you teach and practice what you preach, now is the time for you to take action.

LOCAL CHURCH AUTONOMY

AND THE CHAPLAINCY

The case of Dr. Lemuel Hall — which we plan to discuss in these pages soon — is a pointed illustration of the far-reaching implications of the question of local church autonomy.*

For brief consideration of some of the basic principles which must be kept in view in discussing such a case, we offer some excerpts from an article by B. J. Murrie, who for the past 2 years has been President of the Southern Baptist Press Association. The article appeared in *The Illinois Baptist*, of which Mr. Murrie is editor, on Jan. 27 of this year; it was reprinted in *Good Tidings: The D. C. Southern Baptist*, on Feb. 12.

The article discusses *ordination* in reference to local church authority:

"Ordination is a church function, and not a denominational one. . .

"A local Baptist Church is the only authority which can take away the right of a Baptist minister in the sight of the law. . . . No association, state convention, or the Southern Baptist Convention can decide that any individual preacher can no longer serve as a minister. . . .

"Local Baptist churches are the final authority on denominational endorsement. For some time the Chaplain's Commission, a department of the Home Mission Board, has been giving so-called denominational endorsement for Chaplains in the Army, Navy, and other branches of government service. . . . Withdrawing denominational approval is a matter of church decision. Any commission that assumes this responsibility should assume the responsibility of ordaining him and furnishing him a place to preach. Those functions belong to denominations which have ecclesiastical power invested in recognized bishops or conferences. Such authority is not compatible with . . . Baptist churches. . . .

*Lemuel Hall holds a doctorate from Southern Baptist Seminary. He was a member of the Foreign Mission Board for 6 years, and for a somewhat longer period was District Secretary of Missions in Texas. He has held several responsible committee positions in the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Many people, including most government officials, are totally ignorant of Baptist Church polity. . . . They are familiar with power coming from 'ordained authority' in the form of a bishop or high-church authority. . . . The church [according to the Baptist way] votes on receiving each individual. The church then votes on his fitness for an ordination to the ministry. *It alone can decide on the individual's unfitness.* This authority cannot be delegated to or assumed by any other body, and the church remains a democratic group with equal rights for every individual. This one point has not been seen by some people in our Baptist heritage. *This must be maintained to have complete separation of Church and State.* When the government recognizes any other body on the question of the validity of a Baptist minister, other than the church to which he belongs, it has crossed over into the public domain of that church. *Help keep Church and State Separated.*" (emphasis supplied)

THE PROGRESS OF CATHOLICISM

In speaking to Dr. E. L. Spivey, Sec. of Missions for the Baptist State Convention of N. C., we found how concerned he was about the progress of Roman Catholicism in N. C. The Roman Catholic Church has made considerable inroads in the South, and in so many areas Baptists have thus far made only the most feeble attempts to answer this challenge.

Dr. C. C. Warren wrote the following to Dr. C. K. Rand about the situation: "The Catholics seem to be making Charlotte one of their headquarters for the evangelization of their China (the southeastern part of our Convention)."

Because of the threat of Roman Catholicism to certain phases of religious freedom, we feel that a monthly column on the teachings of the Roman Church would be of benefit to our readers. We have asked Dr. Rand — who was for years field representative of our Home Mission Board in charge of work with Roman Catholics — to write such a column for this paper. This will start with our next issue.